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CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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Cambodia: Sharp fighting flared in several areas over the weekend.

The strategic crossroads town of Skoun, some 35 miles northeast of Phnom Penh, remains in government hands following its recapture on 8 August after more than a week of enemy occupation. The town continues to receive intermittent mortar fire, however, and press reports tell of stiff fighting on its outskirts where the enemy may be regrouping for further attacks.

To the east, hard-pressed government troops defending nearby Prey Totung skirmished with enemy forces near the town's defensive perimeter and came under periodic shelling attacks throughout the weekend. The Communists also launched heavy mortar fire against the airstrip at Kompong Cham city as well as against government positions at the district capital of Tonle Bet.

The three-battalion Khmer Krom relief force that retook Skoun is returning to Phnom Penh to counter possible enemy moves against the capital's outer defenses, according to press reports. Cambodian troops reportedly beat back small-scale enemy probes against several of their garrisons north of the capital this weekend. Unconfirmed press reports, moreover, indicate that Cambodian marines battled enemy infiltrators about two miles from Phnom Penh late yesterday.

Meanwhile, south of Phnom Penh, fresh fighting--reportedly involving at least a battalion of Communist troops--has again broken out at the district town of Saang. Few details are available on this action, however. Saang was occupied by the enemy for several days in April and last saw prolonged heavy fighting in mid-July.

In the west, the city of Kompong Thom continued to receive intermittent mortar, rocket, and recoilless rifle fire over the weekend, but no major

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new enemy ground attacks developed. Cumulative government casualties in the latest round of fighting for control of this key provincial capital stand at 88 killed and 188 wounded. Enemy losses have been placed at 282 killed, although heavy air strikes in the area may have resulted in a considerably higher number of enemy deaths.

Elsewhere in western Cambodia, Communist forces renewed their pressure against the provincial capital Siem Reap, subjecting the city's airfield and military hospital to mortar and automatic weapons fire; casualties and damages were light. Skirmishing was also reported between Cambodian Army patrols and small bands of enemy troops along key approach routes to the city. Government positions at the important crossroads town of Kralanh, northwest of Siem Reap, were also attacked by the enemy during the weekend.

* * * *

The government is planning to proclaim Cambodia a republic this fall. Lon Nol told a Saigon journalist on 5 August that such a declaration will probably be made in two months.



(Map)

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South Vietnam: The Communists appear to be losing ground in Tay Ninh Province.

They reportedly can no longer tax or recruit the villagers of the province as well as they once could, primarily because the government has improved security there.

[redacted] the Communists can neither move as freely around the province nor enter as many settlements as they did a year ago. Parts of this province, which borders Cambodia some 50 miles north of Saigon, have been major Viet Cong strongholds in past years.

Most of the people in the villages now are traveling to and from the marketplace at times when allied units are in the area to protect them. Consequently, the Communists' take from their agricultural tax has been declining in recent months. Although the agricultural tax quota in the first three months of 1970 was more than met, the Viet Cong are reportedly speculating now that their collection for the full year will be only half of the amount collected in 1969.

The inability of the Viet Cong to recruit as they once did has left some gaps in the ranks that they are apparently unable to fill with local recruits. The local Communists are only meeting about a third of their recruitment quotas and the quality of the newer political and military cadre is falling,

[redacted] Some main force units are being broken down to join district and guerrilla units.

Despite these difficulties, the Communists are holding on in the province. A recent assessment by a senior US adviser states that, although allied operations against supply areas in Tay Ninh and Cambodia significantly reduced enemy capabilities in Tay

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Ninh, the Communists still mount some effective attacks against pacification personnel. The older, experienced enemy cadre still seem to have faith that Communist fortunes will improve and that there may be some political compromise within the year.

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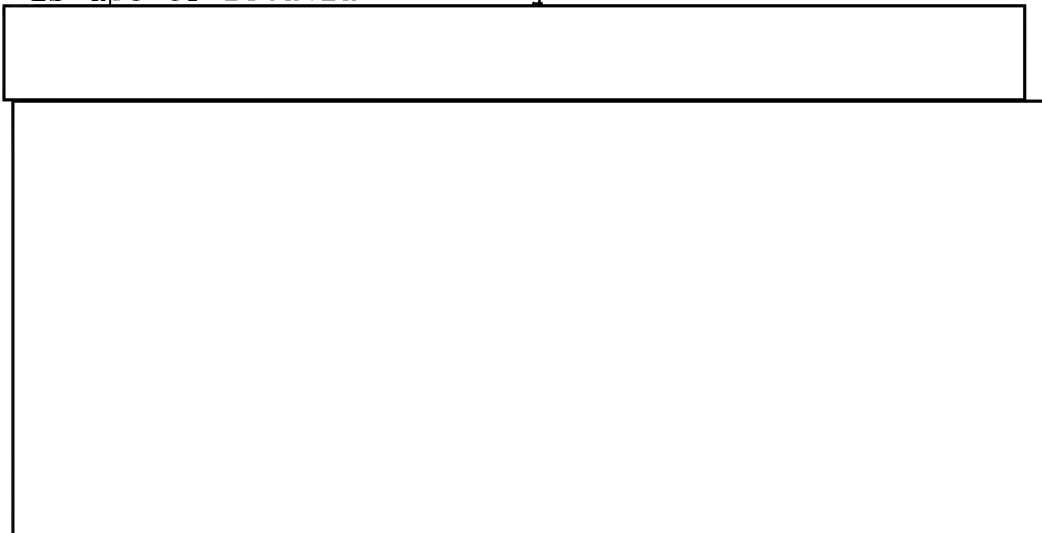
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Arab States - Israel: The Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire along the Suez Canal appears to be holding, but the fedayeen continue their sporadic attacks along Israel's eastern border.

Israeli Chief of Staff Bar-Lev stated that not a single shot had been fired to break the first day of the cease-fire. On 9 August, however, Cairo complained of two violations. It claimed that Israeli aircraft were overflying Suez city, although the Egyptians described the flights as exploratory rather than offensive.

Meanwhile, most of the fedayeen forces continue to resist accepting the Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire and have mounted attacks against the eastern Israeli border to underline their position. Israel has repelled these attacks with few casualties, usually within the lines now held by Israeli forces. One of the fedayeen attacks was against the potash plant near Sodom, south of the Dead Sea, an area usually excluded by tacit agreement. Israel is very sensitive to attacks in this area and is apt to retaliate heavily if the attacks are



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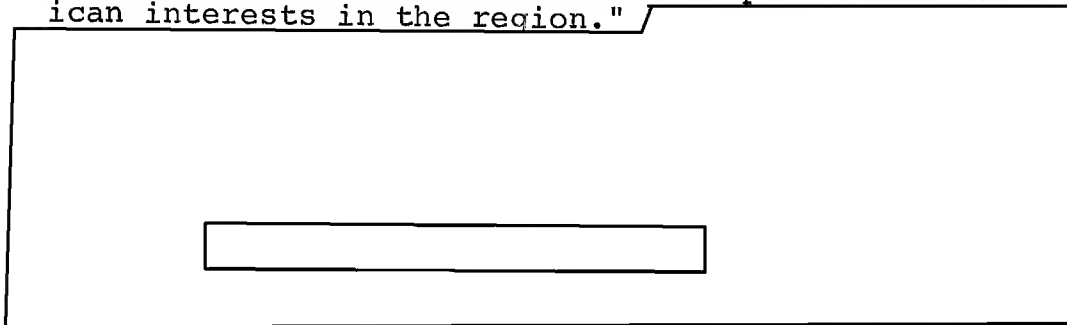
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25X1 The Popular Democratic Front for the Libera-
tion of Palestine has stated that fedayeen attacks
will not be limited to the Israelis but will in-
clude "the destruction of all the imperialist Amer-
ican interests in the region." /



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[Uruguay: The fate of the three captives of the Tupamaro terrorists remains unknown, although there are some grounds for believing that they have not been killed.

Montevideo radio stations received phone calls shortly after noon on 9 August from persons who claimed to be Tupamaros and who said that Mitrione had been executed because the government had ignored the group's deadline for releasing all political prisoners. A later call to a radio station said that the announcement of Mitrione's death was untrue, and added that the Tupamaros would issue a communiqué at noon today.

According to press reports, another hopeful sign for the three came when police interrogated Raul Sendic, a top Tupamaro leader. He and about 15 followers had been picked up in the intensive roundup staged by security forces attempting to locate the abducted trio. The press said Sendic told a judge that he was certain the captives were being held in three different "secure strongholds," and that police efforts to find them would be fruitless. Although Sendic denied that he had been involved in the abductions, police reportedly found personal effects of all three in his house when they arrested him.

Last night President Pacheco requested congress to increase further the extensive powers the executive branch already possesses in order to deal with the terrorist problem.

The Brazilian Government is demonstrating increasing concern about the security situation in Montevideo, and is also attempting to increase pressure on the Uruguayan authorities to do everything possible to obtain the release of its abducted diplomat. On 9 August the Brazilian Embassy announced that any of its personnel and their dependents who wanted to leave could do so; an estimated ten dependents were evacuated to Brazil yesterday. [REDACTED]

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Laos: Brief conversations on 6 August between Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and the Pathet Lao emissary offer no prospects for early or meaningful peace negotiations. At the same time, however, neither side shows any disposition to discontinue the exchange of views. Souvanna told the US ambassador on 7 August he had counterproposed that negotiations begin as soon as possible rather than be preceded by another round of preliminary talks as suggested by Communist leader Souphanouvong. [REDACTED]

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Latin America: The attempt to formulate a united Latin American position on sea rights failed on Saturday when the nine countries now claiming a 200-mile limit were unable to persuade six of the 20 countries attending the Law of the Sea conference in Lima to sign a five-point declaration. The most important provision posited the right of each nation to determine the extent of its maritime sovereignty and jurisdiction according to the geographic and geologic characteristics of its coasts. Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, Bolivia, and Paraguay refused to accept this provision, however, arguing that a 200-mile territorial limit would create chaos and overlapping claims. [REDACTED]

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